

# ARCHIVE OF WORKPLACE WRITING EXPERIENCES

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## SHIFTING VOICE IN NEW WRITING SPACES ASSIGNMENT

*Resources, uncategorized*

**Level:** Can be customized for writers at all levels and disciplines.

**Context:** This assignment focuses on recognizing the shift in rhetorical strategies when writing within different media and writing spaces, particularly within academic, professional, and online modes.

### **Assignment:**

It's natural for us to change how we speak to different audiences within different contexts – the diction and tone of how we'd talk to a good friend is different from how we'd address an employer, a professor, a grandparent, etc. However, when we are asked to make the same shifts in our writing voices, many of us struggle to adapt to varying audiences. In the AWE interview with a Content Manager and Contributing Editor for a lifestyle blog, we hear about how many of us learn to write a specific kind of “college” academic writing in school, but sometimes struggle to write engagingly and authentically in less formal spaces:

I've done so much academic writing my entire education and most of my career , it's really hard for me to be conversational in writing and [...] lot of the comments that I get in terms of edits [are to]

actually make this less stuffy? How can we make it less academic sounding, how can we make it sound less boring? You know how can we make it seem like you're talking to your friend? And I really struggle with that. [...] But it's a totally different kind of writing than I'm used to. So you know I have trouble grasping that part of it. Like, you know it's it's very informal writing, I should say. It's conversational, you know, there's –you know, abbreviations and, and [...] little phrases that people, the kids, nowadays use. But then, it's like, you know, for me it's like well can I take it as seriously as I take say the [New York] Times or The Atlantic or something like that? Like what –you know, what's real and what's better? And there is no better really. It's more in terms of you know are you able to write for your audience?

For this assignment, you will select three writing sources related to your discipline. One will be a scholarly journal article, one will be a trade magazine or professional blog article, and the third will be a top post on a subreddit related to your field. For example, in Psychology, you might select the scholarly journal [Developmental Psychology](#); for your trade magazine article source, you may visit [Psychology Today Magazine](#), and for a subreddit source, you may visit a top post on [r/psychology](#). If you are interested in a field like Finance, you might instead opt for visiting [The Journal of Corporate Finance](#), [Forbes Magazine](#), and [r/personalfinance](#), respectively. Note: for the reddit post, you should choose a top rated post (sort by Top) in the sub's history and also read some of the most upvoted comments. This is one metric we can use to determine “effectiveness” or success of writing in that mode.

Next, for each of these three sources, you will be asked to analyze the tone and style of writing that is generally accepted within each of these writing spaces.

Consider:

### **Scholarly Journal**

1. How would you describe the typical structure of an article/post here?
2. How would you describe the overall tone of the writing? Is it formal? Informal?
3. Do you notice any kind of specialized terms or jargon being used? If so, what are those terms?

4. Do you find this easy or enjoyable to read? Why or why not?
5. Who do you think the audience for this piece is? How can you tell? Are there any words/ideas expressed here that you don't understand?
6. What do you think about the author (who they are, their interests and qualifications) based on the way that they've written this piece?

### **Trade Journal**

1. How would you describe the typical structure of an article/post here?
2. How would you describe the overall tone of the writing? Is it formal? Informal?
3. Do you notice any kind of specialized terms or jargon being used? If so, what are those terms?
4. Do you find this easy or enjoyable to read? Why or why not?
5. Who do you think the audience for this piece is? How can you tell? Are there any words/ideas expressed here that you don't understand?
6. What do you think about the author (who they are, their interests and qualifications) based on the way that they've written this piece?

### **Subreddit**

1. How would you describe the typical structure of an article/post here?
2. How would you describe the overall tone of the writing? Is it formal? Informal?
3. Do you notice any kind of specialized terms or jargon being used? If so, what are those terms?
4. Do you find this easy or enjoyable to read? Why or why not?
5. Who do you think the audience for this piece is? How can you tell? Are there any words/ideas expressed here that you don't understand?
6. What do you think about the author (who they are, their interests and qualifications) based on the way that they've written this piece?

### **Overall**

1. What are the biggest differences you notice between this source and the other sources?
2. What are the biggest similarities (if any) that you notice?
3. What do you think is most important to consider when writing in formal contexts?
4. What do you think is most important to consider when writing in informal online contexts?

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